



Dear Members of the Connecticut Human Services Committee:
Good afternoon, my name is Luis Luna and I'm the Coalition Manager for Husky 4 Immigrants.

Our coalition brings over 30 organizations together in support of **HB 6616: An Act Relating to the Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits for Persons Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.**

We hope that we can continue expanding coverage year after year so that, in the not-so-distant future, all low-income Connecticut residents can access medical care when they are sick or vulnerable regardless of their immigration status. You will hear many of our members' testimony today.

The bill makes fiscal sense.

1. Although we don't yet have a fiscal note for HB 6616, we can calculate the cost of expansion up to age 26 to be approximately \$18.4 million.
2. **The latest data available estimates the cost of FULL EXPANSION of HUSKY to all income-eligible people regardless of immigration status to be \$83.6 million.** This is in stark contrast to the \$200 million fiscal note we saw from the Department of Social Services in 2021.
3. Using the RAND Corporation's COMPARE microsimulation model, researchers last year found that "[s]avings to hospitals from reduced spending on uncompensated care could amount to roughly \$63 million." The RAND report identified even more savings from undocumented people's decreased reliance on emergency Medicaid, which covers emergency care to income-eligible individuals regardless of immigration status. In 2021, Connecticut spent \$15 million on emergency Medicaid alone.
4. There are also some federal waivers available once HUSKY is expanded to all, and we can send you more detailed information on that if you're interested.
5. Good access to care can help reduce costs both for patients and the system, as patients who have issues accessing care may wait until their condition becomes more severe before seeking treatment. When we look at the costs and benefits of HB 6616, it is clear that this bill makes fiscal sense.

We need to expand access to 26 years of age.

1. **The state of Connecticut must create a long term plan to expand HUSKY access to our whole immigrant community, but we must start up to age 26 this year.**

2. Scientific research confirms over and over again that individuals between the ages of 18-26 are still in a key stage of development. Taking care of our youth means expanding access through the entirety of this period.
3. Further, unaddressed health issues from this period of development creates even greater health issues in adulthood. Ensuring that our youth are able to access the care they need is vital to long-term community health.
4. Young adults are less likely than any other age group to have employer-based health insurance. Young adult workers are more likely to have lower-paying jobs that don't offer any benefits at all and are more likely to change jobs frequently. This is why young adults would especially benefit from the healthcare stability that Medicaid offers.

Our communities will not be penalized for utilizing HUSKY.

1. Some of you had concerns about the possibility that receiving HUSKY benefits would prevent folks from obtaining citizenship in the future because of something called the "public charge" rule. We have shared a memo drafted by Yale Law School's Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic explaining why this will not be the case. Basically, the public charge rule only applies to cash benefits and long-term institutionalization paid for by the government. **HUSKY benefits are not considered a benefit for public charge purposes because they are not a form of "public cash assistance."**
2. Furthermore, Connecticut's Department of Social Services generally cannot, under state and federal law, share Medicaid eligibility or benefit usage with ICE or immigration officials.
3. Therefore, receiving HUSKY benefits will almost never be used against an immigrant when they go before immigration officials.
4. This issue is very important to us and we're happy to follow up with any legislator who may be interested.

Most of the public supports expanding HUSKY access.

1. We know many of you want to pass this bill, and we want to assure you that it would be perceived favorably by your constituents. Connecticut voters, across party lines, support the expansion of the HUSKY program for undocumented people.
2. Opinion research conducted by Lake Research Partners last year shows that expanding HUSKY is supported by a majority of CT voters, with 57% of all voters supporting the goals of HB 6616.

Expanding health access is an equity and justice imperative.

1. Access to health is a fundamental human right. No one should be denied healthcare and a chance at survival because of their immigration status. By ensuring that patients can access the care they need, healthcare providers can deliver better care and ensure patients receive preventive care and essential screenings.

2. Most importantly, this policy will improve quality of life for our undocumented families and neighbors, and is an important step in advancing health equity in our state.

Thank you for your time,

Luis